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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 June 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Huntley ..... (Saint Lucia)

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03-40053 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/AC.109/2003/L.9)

2. **The Chairman** drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/66) on the information submitted by the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system concerning their implementation of the Declaration and contained in document E/2003/47, and to the draft resolution submitted by the Chairman (A/AC.109/2003/L.9). Subject to the consent of the members of the Committee, he would give the floor to Mr. Corbin, who would speak on behalf of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands.

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories

3. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Corbin (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) took a place at the Committee table.*

4. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the agenda item relating to the specialized agencies was one of the most important for the populations of the Territories. The numerous General Assembly resolutions on the question constituted a substantial legal basis for the Territories to participate in the work of the United Nations system. In many cases organizations of the United Nations system implemented their mandates in the area concerned through elaborating programmes of assistance and through granting Territories membership, associate membership or observer status.

5. He drew particular attention to the important contribution which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was making to the provision of assistance to many of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. That contribution was well reflected in document E/2003/47. As examples, he mentioned a UNDP regional project for the mitigation of natural disasters, and the provision of expert assistance to Anguilla in the process of political and constitutional reform, as well as projects in other areas, all of which demonstrated the dedication of the United Nations to the development of the Territories. Following the introduction of a series of changes in the criteria for granting assistance, many Non-Self-Governing Territories had acquired the right to participate in the Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme. There was great interest on the part of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands in participating in UNDP regional programmes, and he requested that that interest should be reflected in the section of the draft resolution relating to the United States Virgin Islands.

6. He commended the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for having taken the necessary measures to promote the granting of associate membership to many Non-Self-Governing Territories. Thus, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and the United States Virgin Islands were associate members of ECLAC, and Bermuda, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the Cayman Islands were entitled to such membership, which gave them access to the consultancy services and technical assistance of ECLAC. Since 1992, Territories which were associate members of United Nations regional commissions had had observer status at world conferences. That participation had been of great significance as a way of involving the Territories in capacity-building efforts and in the overall process of development.

7. He noted with satisfaction the recommendation of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee regarding the resumption of the implementation of ECLAC initiatives to extend the participation of associate members in the activities of the United Nations system as a whole. However, not all the specialized agencies had in recent years introduced the necessary changes to their rules of procedure to extend participation by the Territories in their work, as provided for in resolutions of the Special Committee on decolonization.

8. He noted with interest the inclusion in several recent medium-term plans on decolonization of measures aimed at securing assistance for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories from the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. In that connection, he drew attention to the fact that there was no body in

the political mechanism of the United Nations which would coordinate the fulfilment of that function. The publication of reports of various United Nations bodies on the assistance they were giving to the Territories could not be regarded as coordination. Amendments also had to be made to the medium-term plan.

9. As for proposals to remove decolonization issues from the agenda of the Fourth Committee and consider them directly in plenary meetings of the General Assembly, he said that that would deprive representatives of the Territories of an important opportunity to take part in discussions which were of very great importance to the Governments of those Territories. In conclusion, he once again suggested that the Special Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should change the title of the agenda item relating to the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. It would be more correct if the agenda item were entitled "Assistance given to the Non-Self-Governing Territories by the United Nations system". That wording would be more acceptable both to the United Nations agencies and to the Member States, and would enable resolutions on the subject to be adopted by consensus.

10. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda), referring to the statement that Non-Self-Governing Territories which were associate members of regional commissions were entitled to participate in United Nations conferences as observers, said he would be interested to know what practical results such participation had had. Also, he wished to ask the previous speaker to spell out specific proposals regarding the mechanism for political coordination within the United Nations on questions related to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

11. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and also of the freely associating States which were associate members of regional commissions in United Nations conferences was of enormous importance for the process of development, especially for capacity-building. However, associate members of regional commissions did not always have the right to participate in world conferences — that depended on the rules of procedure of the conference concerned. As an example of the practical results of such participation, he pointed to the fact that Non-Self-Governing Territories had been given small grants from the Global Environment Facility. He also said that the regional commissions and UNDP should assist in the provision of information to Non-Self-Governing Territories and expand their participation in the work of implementing conference decisions. To avoid duplication, it was essential to improve coordination on economic matters and to create mechanisms for political coordination accessible to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

12. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea) proposed that the Committee should take note of the proposals made by the previous speaker regarding changes in the Committee's title and in the draft resolution under consideration in order to ensure that the interests of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were taken into account. He asked him to present, in an unofficial form, any information he might have regarding previously adopted resolutions on assistance granted by the specialized agencies. Any information on the matter would help the specialized agencies of the United Nations to provide appropriate assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, in the final analysis, to advance the process of decolonization.

13. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) noted that discussion on the agenda item in the Special Committee on decolonization, the Fourth Committee and the Economic and Social Council took place, as a rule, conducted only after a vote. Judging from the previous year's session of the Economic and Social Council, it appeared that the agencies were not confident that they had a mandate for the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples despite the fact that there had previously been such an understanding. Although he was not proposing a complete change in the way the agenda item was dealt with, he did consider that, in the interests of achieving a consensus, it would probably be possible, in addition, to draw up another draft resolution which would be of a less political nature.

14. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the subject matter of conferences held by organizations in the United Nations system was sometimes so complex that it was difficult even for representatives of independent States to keep up with them in every detail. Since, under the Declaration, the administering Powers were obliged to assist the dependent Territories

until such time as their peoples exercised their right to self-determination, he asked what assistance the administering Powers were giving the Non-Self-Governing Territories in connection with the preparations for such conferences.

15. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands), replying to that question, said that, although delegations from Caribbean countries participating in conferences usually comprised only one person or at the most two people and it was really difficult for them to cover all the meetings, which not infrequently were held simultaneously, their participation in conferences was nevertheless extremely useful, since, as observers, they had an opportunity to participate in the work of regional groups. As for assistance given to the Territories by the administering Powers in connection with the preparations for conferences, he said that, in the cases of American Samoa, Guam and the United States Virgin Islands, consultations were held whenever the need arose for such assistance, although usually the preparations for conferences were undertaken by the regional commissions, which in the case of the Caribbean meant ECLAC. He said he had no objection to that arrangement.

16. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) asked the previous speaker to clarify the position regarding cooperation between the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the Caribbean not only in terms of strengthening their independence but also in terms of their overall development. From what Mr. Corbin had said, it followed that the Territories would like to receive broader assistance from the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the field of education, mainly with regard to the three options for self-determination, and also, as far as possible, on other matters. In the light of what the members of the Committee knew about the close cooperation between some of those Territories, for example between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, specifically in the areas of maritime transport, fisheries, culture and sport, such information would be useful and could be taken into account in the Committee's studies and programmes of work.

17. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the Non-Self-Governing Territories had established a working group to encourage the development of the Territories and to secure their active involvement in the activities of the United Nations system, which was the main mechanism for securing the participation of the Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territories in world conferences, especially with regard to the formulation, at the level of the regional commissions, of recommendations concerning the introduction of amendments to the rules of procedure of conferences regarding the granting to associate members of the right to participate in their work as observers. Although it would seem that the issue of such participation had to be decided automatically, in practice that was not always the case, especially when preparatory measures were drawn up in Geneva. However, there was the example of the rules of procedure for preparatory measures in respect of the World Summit on the Information Society, in which a provision had been included concerning the participation of associate members. Another difficulty was linked to the dissemination of information, specifically in cases where Territories did not receive invitations to a conference.

18. As for the close cooperation between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, he said that in 1990 they had established a bilateral joint commission on the question of holding a joint conference on questions relating to the development of cooperation between the two Territories. At present, there was active cooperation between the two Territories — whose inhabitants, although separated for historical reasons, were nonetheless closely related — in such areas as education, shipping, fisheries, transport, conservation of marine resources, culture and sport. For example, the two Territories were planning to hold a meeting in the coming weeks on natural disaster preparedness with a view to organizing a more effective system of communications.

19. **The Chairman** said that, since the question of integration between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands went beyond the question of self-determination, the Territories should probably discuss it on a bilateral basis.

20. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea), referring to the point made by the representative of the Government of the United States Virgin Islands regarding the revitalization of the activities of the United Nations and to the proposal that the Committee should submit its reports directly to the General Assembly, rather than through the Fourth Committee, said that his delegation was interested in revitalizing the activities of the Organization and was closely following the discussion

of questions concerning the future of the Fourth Committee, the First Committee and other Committees; for its part it would do everything in its power to ensure that the representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories were given the opportunity to participate in meetings.

21. **Mr. Ortiz Gandarillas** (Bolivia) said that, in order to achieve the decolonization and self-government of the islands, it was essential to ensure the implementation of existing resolutions. He asked about the possibility of creating a confederation of the islands under the administration of the United Kingdom, and also about how the agreement on achieving self-government for the British colonies was being implemented.

22. **Mr. Corbin** (Government of the United States Virgin Islands) said that he would not wish to make any recommendations regarding the forms of unification of the British Territories, but it was important to point out that at the moment a number of Territories were participating in a regional movement towards integration. All the British Territories were associate members of the Caribbean Community or observers.

23. The process of implementation was of enormous importance, but in some cases it was implemented only partially or there was an incorrect understanding of what it represented. It was proposed that the specialized agencies should submit information on the assistance they gave to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, but by no means all of them did so. He expressed the hope that they would provide the necessary information in the future.

24. The efforts of the United Nations and of the Committee in organizing the Seminar in Anguilla deserved the highest praise. It had been the first seminar to be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, and a very large number of participants had taken part. The inhabitants of the Territories did not have enough information about the self-government options. The Seminar had offered an opportunity for them to get such information, which was now being disseminated in the Territories. Many countries were eagerly awaiting the Seminar's recommendations and were giving consideration to the question of implementing them. Moreover, plans of action were not always properly implemented. Efforts had to be focused on the implementation of resolutions on decolonization, especially of plans of action, and the situation on the ground had to be carefully analysed.

25. *Mr. Corbin withdrew.*

26. **The Chairman** said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/AC.109/2003/L.9 without a vote.

27. *Draft resolution A/AC.109/2003/L.9 was adopted.*

28. **Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla** (Cuba), speaking in explanation of his position, proposed that at its next session the Committee should discuss with representatives of the specialized agencies and the institutions of the United Nations their work relating to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, the difficulties they encountered, and also how the Committee could contribute to encouraging their activities.

29. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) said he supported the position of the representative of Cuba and pointed to the need for UNDP to provide information on its activities in the Territories and how it was contributing to their development. Some thought should be given to the question of how UNDP could be involved in the process of disseminating information regarding the possible options for mutual relations with the mother country. The agencies played an extremely important role, and working relations should be established with them. Use could then be made of all the advantages they had when it came to implementing an information policy within the framework of the Second International Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism.

Draft report on the Caribbean Regional Seminar (A/AC.109/2003/CRP.1)

30. **The Chairman** noted that, following its return to New York, the drafting group established in Anguilla had held consultations and a number of meetings to complete work on the report taking into account comments from delegations. He expressed the hope that the Seminar's recommendations would become a reality in the coming months and that other administering Powers, noting the success of a seminar held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, would take steps to hold one in the Pacific region.

31. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire) expressed gratitude to the Government of the United Kingdom for having organized a seminar in a Non-Self-Governing

Territory and pointed out that the participation of a representative of the United Kingdom had been an important contribution, ensuring the success of the Seminar. Such events were extremely useful and should be encouraged, since they made it possible to obtain a full picture of what was going on in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It would be useful to know the views of the administering Power on the Seminar in Anguilla, which would help with the preparation of future events of a similar kind.

32. **The Chairman** informed members of the Committee that the first response of the administering Power had been positive and that a basis had been laid for further cooperation.

33. **Mr. Ovia** (Papua New Guinea), taking up the point made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, called on the administering Powers (the United Kingdom, France, the United States of America and New Zealand) to engage in further cooperation with the Special Committee so as to provide the conditions for the holding of a Pacific regional seminar in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Holding a seminar in a Non-Self-Governing Territory enabled non-governmental organizations, representatives of civil society and interested community representatives to take part in its work and provided a more profound understanding of the issues that were of concern to the communities of those Territories. In spite of the fact that those issues were of a political nature and required a cautious approach, it would be significantly easier to find an acceptable solution with joint efforts and comprehensive cooperation on the part of the administering Power.

34. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) pointed out that the report provided a sufficiently accurate reflection of the essentials of what had taken place in Anguilla. He proposed that a personal letter should be sent to Mr. Roy Osborne expressing gratitude for the patience he had displayed, his readiness to meet representatives of the local community and his willingness openly to discuss all questions, which had been one of the factors that had ensured the success of the Seminar. With the support of the United Kingdom, an attempt should be made to hold the next meeting in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific region, for example in New Caledonia, in Guam or in other territories under the administration of France or the United States of America.

35. **The Chairman** said that the contribution the representative of the United Kingdom had made to the successful completion of the Seminar's work would be officially acknowledged in the letter he intended to send.

36. **Mr. Blanco** (Venezuela) noted the success of the Seminar — the first to have been held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory — and expressed satisfaction with the results achieved. The Seminar was an important source of the latest information regarding Non-Self-Governing Territories. Such measures emphasized the link between economic and social issues, and helped in the search for pragmatic and innovative ways to move forward. One of the important issues was the lack of information given to the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. An important role in that connection had to be played not only by the Special Committee and the United Nations but also by the Governments of the administering Powers and of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was essential to increase the effectiveness of the process of providing information, particularly concerning the options for self-determination. Discussion of those options was of very great importance. The Committee should discuss the question of the fourth option for self-determination to which petitioners had referred.

37. **The Chairman** said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Special Committee wished to adopt the draft report of the Caribbean Regional Seminar and to append it to the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

38. *The draft report on the work of the Caribbean Regional Seminar was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.